Landing a Job as a Veterinary Technician

**Overview**

##### write your resume

* + **Prepare a cover letter**
  + **Browse online job listings**
  + **Contact veterinarians in your area**
  + **Complete a job application**
  + **Prepare for a job interview**
  + **summing it up**

Remember the days when looking for a job consisted of simply scanning the Help Wanted ads in a local newspaper? Do not overlook newspaper classifieds when you begin searching for work as a veterinary technician, but keep in mind that this is only one of many avenues you should take to find a job. If you are especially lucky, you may be offered a job in the veterinary practice where you completed an internship, but this does not always happen. You may have been working in another occupation while pursuing your studies and may have completed a practicum, a long-term project, instead of an internship. And even if you did complete an internship and the veterinarian and his or her staff thought you did a terrific job, they may not have a job opening. In these instances, you need to find a job—and the best way to do this is to search proactively, which means you must take the initiative to find job openings.

### wriTe yOUr resUme

You need to prepare a resume before you start searching for a job. Resume styles vary greatly, but be sure to choose one that is clear and easy to read and that draws attention to your strengths.

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**required sections**

Your resume should contain the following sections:

* **Contact Information:** Your contact information includes your name, address, phone number, and e-mail address. If your e-mail address is not professional, get a new one to use during your job search. Many business- people use their first initial and their last name as their e-mail address, as in [TSmith@youremailprovider.com.](mailto:TSmith@youremailprovider.com)
* **Objective:** Your objective is your goal. The objective of your resume may be as simple as “To obtain a job as a veterinary technician.”
* **Education:** List your education on your resume beginning with the most recent. If your resume is short, include a few bulleted points about your course of study. Be sure to include your school’s name and address, the dates during which you attended, and the degree you obtained. (See Figure 2-1, “Sample Veterinary Technician Resume.”) If your work experience is stronger than your education, list your work experience first. The goal is to make your resume look as impressive as possible.
* **Work Experience:** Begin with the most recent, and keep in mind that it is not necessary to include every job that you have ever held. Include relevant experience, such as experience working with animals or as a receptionist. If you completed an internship, you might want to begin with this. If you held an unrelated job for several years, include this job because it shows that you are reliable.
* **License/Certification/Memberships:** Depending on the state in which you live, indicate that you are licensed or certified. For example, you might add “New Jersey Licensed Animal Health Technician.” Also indicate if you belong to any societies, which are also called associations, such as the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA).

**Optional sections**

You might also want to include some of these sections on your resume:

* **References:** Some resumes include two or three references. If you have a reference from a veterinarian or someone who works in a veterinary office, you might want to include this information. Past instructors are also good references. Be sure to ask each individual if it is okay to include him or her as a reference before doing so. It is also fine to write “Available upon Request” after the heading References on your resume.
* **Skills:** Some resumes include a list of skills or special qualifications that look impressive. For example, under the heading “Skills,” you might include “Perform laboratory procedures” and “Communicate well with customers.”
* **Honors and Awards:** If you have achieved a special honor or award, such as being a member of the National Honor Society in high school, you might want to list this on your resume.

##### figure 2-1. sample veterinary Technician resume.

**Melanie Harrison**

**145 Main Street Apartment D Philadelphia, PA 19119**

**(215) 451-0000**

[**MHarrison@youremailprovider.com**](mailto:MHarrison@youremailprovider.com)

**OBJECTIVE:**

To work in a veterinary practice as a veterinary technician.

**SKILLS:**

* Provide basic and specialized nursing care
* Obtain and record patient case histories
* Maintain and stock medicine and supplies
* Communicate well with customers
* Collect specimens
* Perform laboratory procedures
* Prepare animals, equipment, and instruments for surgery

**EDUCATION:**

**09-09 to 05-11: Associate’s Degree in Veterinary Technology**

Central Community College Philadelphia, PA 19144

**EXPERIENCE:**

**2010–2011: Veterinary Technician Intern**

*Duties included monitoring medical supplies, providing basic nursing care, monitoring surgical patients, and communicat- ing with veterinarians and clients.*

Riverside Veterinary Hospital 715 Main Street

Philadelphia, PA 19119

**2008 to present: Shelter Volunteer**

*Duties included caring for cats and dogs in the shelter; communicating with visitors considering adoption; answering phones; assisting visitors with documentation needed for adoption; communicating with visiting veterinarians.*

Skytop Animal Shelter 10 Mountain Terrace

Philadelphia, PA 19119

**2005 to 2007: Customer Service Representative (part time)**

*Duties included answering telephones, taking orders, and entering orders into a database; ensured that orders were shipped on time; frequently communicated with employees in other departments.*

Jane’s Discount Warehouse The Mall at Tenth Street Philadelphia, PA 19119

**CERTIFICATION & MEMBERSHIPS:**

Pennsylvania Licensed Veterinary Technician

Member of the National Association of Veterinary Technicians in America (NAVTA) Member of Philadelphia Friends of the Animals

### PrePare a COver LeTTer

You should include a cover letter when you send your resume to veterinary practices and other animal-care facil- ities. State your purpose in your cover letter, summarize your qualifications, mention any important or interesting information that is not on your resume, and express your interest in working at a particular facility. Your cover letter gives a prospective employer a glimpse of your personality, education, and experience as well as your writing skills. It is not necessary to prepare a different cover letter for every veterinary practice you apply to. Save the body of your letter on a computer and add the date, veterinarian’s or office manager’s name, and the address of the practice before you send it. Follow these guidelines when writing a cover letter:

* Your name and contact information should be centered at the top of page. Your contact information includes your address, home tele- phone number, and e-mail address.

**tip**

Always spell check and carefully proofread your cover letter and resume. Read each of these documents word for word. Put your finger on each word and say it aloud. This will help you spot words that you inadvertently omitted. Have someone else proofread your cover letter and

resume as well. Sometimes others will easily spot mistakes that you did not see. A cover letter and resume containing misspelled words and incorrect grammar will not make a good impression on a veterinarian.

* Always include the date flush left.
* Include the name and address of the veterinarian and the practice flush left under the date. You can find the names of veterinarians in your area online or in the phone book. However, if the animal hospital is very large or if you are applying to a shelter, finding the right name might not be so easy. In this case, call ahead and ask who should receive your resume. A large facility might have an office manager or a senior veterinary technician who is in charge of hiring. When sending a cover letter to a veterinarian, always precede his or her name with “Dr.”
* The salutation, or greeting, of your cover letter should simply say, “Dear Dr. [surname]” followed by a colon.
* Take time when drafting the body of your cover letter. Remember that a veterinarian or office manager will form a first impression of you based on your letter. The content of your message may vary, but in general you should do the following:
  + State your name and express your interest in working as a veterinary technician at that particular veterinary practice.
  + Summarize your education and experience. If you do not have relevant experience, include the duties you performed during your internship or skills that you acquired at school.
  + Request an interview and indicate when you are available.
* Close your letter with ” Sincerely” followed by a comma. Skip a few spaces and type your name. Sign your name in this space after you print your cover letter.

See Figure 2-2 for a sample cover letter.

##### figure 2-2. your cover letter should be grammatically correct and informative and convey a warm and friendly tone.

**Melanie Harrison**

**145 Main Street Apartment D Philadelphia, PA 19119**

**215-451-0000**

[**MHarrison@youremailprovider.com**](mailto:MHarrison@youremailprovider.com)

January 10, 20--

Dr. Marvin Freeman Southside Animal Hospital 254 Kennedy Boulevard

Philadelphia, PA 19119

Dear Dr. Freeman:

As a recent graduate of Central Community College with an associate degree in veterinary technology, I am very interested in joining your practice as a veterinary technician.

My education includes an internship at Philadelphia’s Riverside Veterinary Hospital, 715 Main Street, under the direction of Dr. Amir Pagani. My duties included conversing with owners to obtain and record patient case histories. Barbara Bennett, a veterinary technician overseeing my training, commended my oral and written communication skills. I also maintained holding areas for animals, provided basic and special- ized nursing care, collected specimens, and performed simple laboratory procedures. As a shelter volunteer for several years, I am comfortable working with dogs and cats of all sizes and temperaments. My love of animals is the primary reason that I am pursuing a career as a veterinary technician.

Since no veterinary technician openings are available at Riverside Veterinary Hospital, I am including a copy of a letter of recommendation from Dr. Pagani in which he states that I am well-qualified for an entry- level position as a veterinary technician and would be an asset to any veterinary practice.

I hope you will contact me soon for an interview, even if you do not currently have an opening available. Friends and family have told me that you offer pets exceptional care, and I would really like to meet you and tour your facilities. I hope to be part of your team.

Sincerely,

***Melanie Harrison***

Melanie Harrison

### BrOwse OnLine JOB LisTings

With a click of a mouse, you can find dozens of veterinary technician jobs online. Many search engines allow you to search for these jobs by state. Simply type “Veterinary Technician Jobs in PA,” and you will access a listing for job openings in Pennsylvania. If you live in a large city, try searching for jobs within this city. Even your local newspaper most likely posts job ads online.

Also check the Web sites of national societies or associations such as NAVTA. Other associations include the American Veterinary Medical Association (AVMA) and the American Animal Hospital Association (AAHA). Individual states have their own association, which you easily access online.

### COnTaCT veTerinarians in yOUr area

While online listings are helpful in locating a job, some veterinarians do not advertise jobs because they have many resumes on file. This is why it is important to be proactive in your job search. Send your resume and cover letter to veterinarians in your area. You can also drop off your resume and cover letter in person. However, if you do this, make sure you are dressed professionally. (See the “Dress for Success” sidebar in this chapter.) Also be prepared to fill out a job application, even if the veterinarian does not have any openings. You will learn what you need to bring with you to fill out a job application in the next section.

To find a list of veterinarians in your area, access Yellow Pages online or look in the Yellow Pages of your telephone book. Make a list of the veterinary practices in your area. Some of them may have Web sites. If they do, spend a few minutes online to learn about their facilities. You might see something worth mentioning in your cover letter.

Once you have a list, send a cover letter and a resume to each veterinary practice. If your schedule is flexible and you are able to work nights and weekends, send a cover letter and resume to animal emergency clinics, too.

**aPPlying for Jobs online**

Should you e-mail your resume to prospective employers? If you are responding to a job advertisement that says to apply via e-mail, then you should absolutely e-mail your cover letter and resume. However, when you are contacting veterinarians who are not advertising for a veterinary technician, snail mail is best. Imagine the number of e-mails veterinarians receive in one day. Do you think they replay to—or even read—every e-mail message they receive? Probably not. On the other hand, if you snail mail your resume, the person at the front desk may open it. He or she may be impressed by your qualifications and pass along your resume to the veteri- narian or office manager. Furthermore, hardcopy cover letters and resumes are often kept on file while e-mails may be deleted.

### COmPLeTe a JOB aPPLiCaTiOn

Most veterinary practices will ask you to complete a job application even if you have submitted a cover letter and a resume. A job appli- cation requires you to give specific details about yourself, your edu- cation, and your work history. If you are asked to come in for a job interview, expect to complete a job application. You might also be asked to fill out a job application if you are dropping off your cover letter and resume or if you are touring the veterinarian’s facilities.

**tip**

While it is fine to ask questions after a job interview, refrain from asking about salary, benefits, and time off. It is better to ask questions about the job itself. If you are offered the job, you will be told about salary and other perks.

Gather the following items ahead of time to help you accurately com- plete a job application:

* + Your Social Security card
  + Your driver’s license
  + The name and address of the college you attended and the dates you attended
  + A copy of your occupational license, certificate, or registration
  + The names, addresses, and phone numbers of your past employers and the dates when you worked there
  + The names, phone numbers, and e-mail addresses of three references

While job applications vary, most ask for basically the same information. Reviewing the job application in Figure 2-3 will help you know what to expect.

##### figure 2-3. most job applications ask for very specific information that is not usually included on a resume.

**Application for Employment**

**Personal Employment**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Last Name** | **First** |  | **Middle** |  | **Date** |
| **Street Address** | | | | | **Home Phone ( )-** |
| **City, State, Zip** | | | | | |
| **Business Phone ( ) -** | | | | | **E-mail Address:** |
| **Are you over 18 years of age? Yes No**  **If not, employment is subject to verification of minimum legal age.** | | | | | |
| **Have you ever applied for employment with us?**  **Yes No**  **If Yes: Month and Year Location** | | | | | **Social Security No.**  **- -** |
| **How did you learn of our organization?** | | | | | |
| **Are you legally eligible for employment in the United States? If no, when will you be able to work?** | | | | | |
| **Are you employed now? If so, may we inquire of your present employer?** | | | | | |
| **Have you ever been convicted of a crime in the past ten years, excluding misdemeanors and summary offenses, which has not been annulled, expunged, or sealed by the court? Yes No**  **If yes, describe in full.** | | | | | |
| **Are there any reasons for which you might not be able to perform the job duties (with a reasonable accommodation)?**  **Yes No If yes, please explain.** | | | | | |
| **Driver’s License #** |  | **State** |  | **Any Violations? Yes No** | |

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**Education**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **School** | **Name and location of school** | **Course of study** | **No. of years completed** | **Did you graduate?** | **Degree or diploma** |
| **College** |  |  |  | **Yes No** |  |
| **High** |  |  |  | **Yes No** |  |
| **Trade** |  |  |  | **Yes No** |  |
| **Other** |  |  |  | **Yes No** |  |

**Military**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Complete this section if you served in the U.S. Armed Forces** | **Branch of Service** |
| **Describe your duties and any special training:** | **Period of Active Duty (Mo. & Yr.)**  **From To** |
| **Rank at Discharge** |
| **Date of Final Discharge** |

**Employment History**

Please give accurate, complete full-time and part-time employment record. Start with the present or most recent employer.

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **1.** | **Company Name** | **Telephone**  **( ) -** |
| **Address** | **Employed (Start Mo. & Yr.) From To** |
| **Name of Supervisor** | **Hourly Rate**  **Start Last** |
| **Starting Job Title and Describe Your Work** | **Reason for Leaving** |

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|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **2.** | **Company Name** | | **Telephone ( )** | **-** |
| **Address** | | **Employed (Start Mo. & Yr.) From To** | |
| **Name of Supervisor** | | **Hourly Rate Start** | **Last** |
| **Starting Job Title and Describe Your Work** | | **Reason for Leaving** | |
| **3.** | **Company Name** | | **Telephone ( )** | **-** |
| **Address** | | **Employed (Start Mo. & Yr.) From To** | |
| **Name of Supervisor** | | **Hourly Rate Start** | **Last** |
| **Starting Job Title and Describe Your Work** | | **Reason for Leaving** | |
| **We may contact the employers listed above unless you indicate those you do not want us to contact.** | | **Do not contact**  **Employer number(s) Reason** | | |

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **References:** Below, list the names of three persons not related to you, whom you have known at least one year. | | | |
| **Name** | **Address** | **Business** | **Years Acquainted** |
| **1.** |  |  |  |
| **2.** |  |  |  |
| **3.** |  |  |  |

Signature

Date

The information provided in this Application for Employment is true, correct, and complete. If employed, any misstatements or omissions of fact on this application may result in my dismissal. I understand that acceptance of an offer of employment does not create a contractual obligation upon the employer to continue to employ me in the future.

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### PrePare fOr a JOB inTerview

If a veterinarian has a job opening or anticipates having one in the future, you may be asked to come in for a job interview. A job interview is a chance for a prospective employer to get to know you and determine whether you are a good fit for an organization.

When it comes to job interviews, preparation is the key to success. Always arrive about 10 minutes early for a job interview. If you need to, drive to the veterinarian’s office a day or two before the interview so you know exactly where to go and where to park. Gather your clothes and the items you need the night before the interview. Dress casually but professionally. (See the “Dressing for Success” sidebar in this chapter.) Bring a copy of your resume as well as the information and documents you need to complete a job application.

When you arrive at the veterinary practice, be polite and friendly with the staff. Introduce yourself and smile. Understand that veterinary practices are busy places. Be patient and polite with the staff if you are asked to have a seat in the reception area. Respond affectionately to any animals that greet you while you wait. Greet your inter- viewer with a firm handshake. Do not take a seat until you are told to do so.

Job interviews are stressful. Preparing answers to questions ahead of time and practicing your responses will help you perform well. The following are some common interview questions. Have a friend or family member ask you these and other questions. Always listen to the entire question and wait until the veterinarian has finished speaking to respond. Use correct grammar and avoid using slang in your responses.

* + Tell me about yourself. *(Keep in mind that the veterinarian does not want to learn your favorite food. Your response should offer information about your education and work experience. It is also fine to note if you are especially hardworking or a quick learner.)*

**note**

When you interview for a job as a veterinary technician, some of the questions you will be asked will be easy to answer. A veterinarian will likely ask about your education and your experience with customers and animals.

Other questions, however, may be more difficult to answer. Some interviewers ask questions such as, “What are your greatest strengths and your greatest weaknesses?” Now, you are probably thinking*: The strength part is easy, but what do I say is my greatest weaknesses?* Choose a weakness that is true, but not serious—and always explain

what you have done to overcome this weakness. For example,

you might say that your greatest weakness is taking on too much at one time, and you have since learned to ask for help when you need it.

* + Tell me about the duties you performed during your internship/last job. (*Write out your answer to this question beforehand. While you cannot use your notes during your interview, composing a response will help you provide a good summary of the tasks you completed.)*
  + Why do you want to work here? *(It is fine to say that you are eager to begin a career as a veterinary technician, but if you can, think of something specific related to that office. If the staff is warm and friendly and the customers seem happy, mention this.)*
  + How do you handle stressful situations? *(Think of some stressful situations in the past. Mention one of these and explain how you coped with the situation. If you were overwhelmed by too many tasks, perhaps you made a to-do list to help you prioritize your work.)*
  + Why should I hire you? (*Mention that you are hardworking and eager to learn. Back it up with previous job experience if you can.)*
* How would you handle an irate or very upset customer? (*Explain that you would remain calm. Paraphrasing the customer’s complaint shows the customer that you understand what he or she is saying. Apologize and inform the customer that you will do everything you can to rectify the situation.)*

Answer the veterinarian’s questions honestly and completely. Do not be afraid to say, “No, I don’t have experience with that yet, but I would really like to learn.” After the interview, thank the veterinarian for his or her time, and follow up with a thank-you note.

**Dress for Success**

You should dress casually for a job interview at a veterinarian’s office—but keep in mind that casual does not mean sloppy. Do not wear jeans, shorts, a t-shirt, sneakers, sandals, or flip-flops. A pair of casual slacks or a casual skirt is best. A button-down shirt is a good option. If you are a woman, wear low-heeled shoes. Make sure your hair is neat and away from your face. Remove any facial piercings. Men should shave all facial hair, although a neatly trimmed beard is often acceptable. Women should wear only light makeup.

### sUmming iT UP

* + You need to prepare your resume before you begin looking for a job. A resume lists your contact information, objective, education, employment experience, and licenses/certifications/memberships. Some resumes also include references, special skills that you possess, and honors and awards that you have won.
  + You should send a cover letter with your resume. A cover letter states why you are sending your resume, sum- marizes your education and working experience, and requests an interview.
  + Browsing job openings online is one way to search for a job as a veterinary technician. You should also make a list of local veterinarians and mail your resume and cover letter to each of them.
  + When you are interviewing for a job, you may be asked to complete a job application. A job application asks for specific information that is usually not included on your resume, such as your Social Security number and the contact information of your former supervisors.
  + Preparation is the key to easing your nerves during a job interview. Practice responding to questions that are commonly asked during job interviews.